



## Trinity Section Of The American Nuclear Society



November 10, 2000

Mr. Peter Maggiore  
Cabinet Secretary  
New Mexico Environment Department  
Harold Runnels Building  
1190 St. Francis Drive  
Santa Fe, NM 87505

Dear Sir:

As the current chair of the Trinity Section of the American Nuclear Society, I am writing to you to express our position on the Mixed Waste Landfill located at Sandia National Laboratory. We hope that you will give this position consideration during the decision making process on landfill related issues.

The American Nuclear Society (ANS) is a not-for-profit, international, scientific and educational organization established to unify the professional activities within the diverse fields of nuclear science and technology. ANS has a membership composed of approximately 11,000 engineers and scientists. The Trinity Section of ANS is composed of ANS members residing in the State of New Mexico.

At the present time, there are no experimental data that would indicate that the integrity of the Mixed-Waste Landfill of the Sandia National Laboratory has been compromised. The landfill, therefore, poses no immediate or short-term threat to the ground water far below it. In addition, there are no apparent pathways that could indicate the possibility of a long-term threat of ground water contamination. The presently existing network of monitoring wells provides adequate long term monitoring that would warn in a timely fashion if the situation were to change. If significant changes in groundwater activity were to be found, these measurements could indicate the need for a re-evaluation. Consequently, no further sampling

activities can be justified at present, except for the monitoring activities already planned.

The excavation of the Mixed Waste Landfill which was proposed by some people is not safe at this time and would increase the risk to the workers and the public if carried out. The reason is that the transfer to another place would mobilize and suspend some of the toxic and radioactive components in the air. These agents lead to an inhalation and ingestion risk, which is much larger than the risk of leaving the waste in place, covered by an additional protective layer of soil. At a later date, 30 or 40 years from now, after the short-lived radionuclides have decayed safely away, the situation can be re-evaluated. Meanwhile, monitoring under the Long-Term Stewardship Plan needs to be endorsed and implemented.

Our evaluation of the available information leads to the following conclusions: the public calls for excavation of the site are unreasonable and not supported by the available scientific or economic data, the data indicates that the site is well characterized and that long-term stewardship plans are more appropriate than short-term excavation, and the health and safety of residents of the State of New Mexico are adequately protected.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Michael C. Baker".

Michael C. Baker, Ph.D., P.E.

Chair, Trinity Section of the American Nuclear Society

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Los Alamos, NM 87544